



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

A STATE ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

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Media Release

From: Sergeant Donna Black
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Re: Hernando County Sheriff's Office Detention Facility
Newly Formed Special Response Team

Date: May 27, 2011

The week of April 11-15, 2011, proved especially challenging for the ten members of the newly formed Hernando County Sheriff's Office Detention Facility Special Response Team (SRT). The new SRT team participated in rigorous training at the Pinellas County Detention Facility with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office training staff.

When the Sheriff was placed in charge of operating the Jail on August 27, 2010, one of the many priorities was to develop and train a SRT team. The SRT purpose is to quell disturbances inside the facility, handle violent cell extractions and deal with high risk inmates who are confined at the facility.

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office Correction and Detention Bureau staff was contacted for their assistance in training and assessing the new team member's qualifications. Without hesitation Pinellas County Sheriff's Office and Detention Bureau agreed to train our new team.

Detention Deputies who expressed interested in becoming a team member went through tryouts which included interviews, physical durability testing, mental assessment and maturity consideration. Ten Detention Deputies were selected from all the candidates who tried out and were slated to begin the training in April.

Beginning on April 11th, the Hernando team met each morning in the very early hours to travel to Pinellas County to begin the day's grueling schedule which lasted all day in brutally hot and dry weather. Team building practices ranged from pep talks to carrying heavy telephone poles on their shoulders as a group. Specific emergency response training was focused on daily life within detention facilities, such as barricaded subjects and violent inmates where the team had to learn the basics on how to disarm and incapacitate a subject with as little potential harm to staff and the subject as possible.

On May 17, 2011 at the Hernando County Sheriff's Awards Ceremony, Sheriff Al Nienhuis introduced the new team to the Sheriff's Office employees. Sheriff Nienhuis said "having a well trained, qualified Special Response Team comprised of professionals ensures the most secure, safe environment for the inmates, staff and general public." Sheriff Nienhuis presented each team member with a congratulatory memo for their personnel file and a SRT pin which will be worn on their uniform. Family members were on hand to watch the ceremony and snap pictures.

Attending the award ceremony were Pinellas County Sheriff's Office SRT Trainers, Sergeant James Petruzzi and Corporal Jennifer Johnson. They were two of the basic trainers for us during the week long training. Sheriff Al Nienhuis recognized them and said "We are thankful to the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office for their assistance in providing the basic ground work to make sure the Hernando Sheriff's Office SRT team is properly prepared to handle any emergency that may arise."